



To  
MY WIFE



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## *INTRODUCTION*



## INTRODUCTION

It is not my intention to write a chronological description of my ancestors or of the history of our House. Material enough for that purpose has been collected by historians. I simply propose to record the general impression of the personalities of my forefathers, and of their efficiency, as received in my youth, and as the passage of years has left stamped firmly on my mind.

The Zollerns are just men like other men. It goes without saying therefore, that in the course of the five hundred years of its rule our House had produced personalities of very different kinds. Energetic characters are succeeded by weaker ones, gifted by less gifted, capable by less capable. And, according to the varying talents and dispositions of the different Princes, so there is a difference in the spheres of interest in which they develop their natural gifts and abilities,

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whether these be of a more warlike, a more artistic, or of a more scientific and peaceable nature. Owing to their deeply-rooted inward religious fervour they all regarded themselves as being responsible to God for their actions and achievements—as the Elector Frederick I expressed it—“As the simple bailiffs of God in the performance of His work.” This sense of personal responsibility to God automatically compelled them to keep the “good” of the “Whole” always before them, and to put the principal of *Suum cuique* into practice, long before Frederick I had these words engraved on the Star of the Order of the Black Eagle. This *Suum cuique* could only be converted into practice by firm adherence to the following fundamental principal and basic guiding line—the creation of an “objective State-Authority,” standing above all parties and specially interested groups, and kept free from the influences of outside interests. Only thus could the meaning of *Suum cuique* be brought to full effect—

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that is, the "objective State-Authority" would be at its purest when embodied in the person of a Monarch, who would neither be compelled to win parties over to himself through the concession of every conceivable sort of privilege, nor could himself be won over by them—being, in his independence of material and financial things, independent of the struggle for position, career and external possibilities of advancement in which every one else engages. He would incorporate the authority of the State with its most important attribute: he would be, through his very position, incorruptible.

What the Hohenzollerns, in such a situation, have made of the Nation and out of the Nation, a Hohenzollern, who, all his life, has given much thought to the work and ways of his ancestors, will here attempt to sketch in a few lines.

*Doorn: November 9, 1928.*





*THE FIRST ZOLLERNS*



## THE FIRST ZOLLERNS

THE Emperor Frederick II, the Hohenstaufen, was without doubt one of the most notable figures among the German Emperors. He stands out prominently from the ranks of his contemporaries by virtue of a conception, which, for his epoch, was absolutely creative. This was the conception—only to be fully realised in modern times—of the “State,” ruled and directed by an “objective State-Authority.” Standing above everything, independent of the interested actions of classes and corporate bodies, free from the influence of the dominating Church ever greedy for rule, this State-Authority should, and would, keep the interest of the “Whole” alone in view, and render everything subservient to that “Whole,” that is to the “State.” (Gmelin: “Das Antlitz des Kaisers”). In his tenacious pursuit of this idea the Emperor

Frederick II raised Sicily and South Italy, in particular, through his economic and financial measures, to a high degree of prosperity. But his creation had no endurance. When he closed his eyes it went with him to dust. Politically his plans were wrecked by the eternal opposition of the German Princes, by the unreliability to his Italian subjects and by the Church, which laid claim to a considerable right of jurisdiction in worldly affairs, and which had decided not to suffer, under any circumstances, the erection alongside itself of such a structure as the Emperor was striving to build. And so the conception of the "State," as such, disappeared again from man's field of vision.

Rudolf of Habsburg revived it. This great Emperor also grasped the conception of a "strong Imperial Central Authority"—"the objective State Authority"—and exerted himself to translate it into practice. It is known that his cousin, the Burgrave of Nuremberg, was successful in uniting the

majority of the Electors' votes in favour of the Count of Habsburg, chiefly because the latter, a relatively poor man, wielded no power of family influence. This was always of great importance in the Imperial elections, because the powerful Electors then had the prospect of being able to ring concessions of all sorts of privileges from the Emperor, when difficult situations arose in which he would have to appeal to them for help. Rudolf saw this clearly, and he began to lay the foundations of the edifice of the Habsburg's family power. His successors threw themselves into the work with such zeal—building up their power by succession- and family-settlements, e.g., Margaret Maultasch—that by degrees the great and vigorous “State idea” faded more and more away. Maximilian extended the system—Burgundy—and soon it was the conception of “family power” alone—that of the personal dynastic interests of the Habsburg's alone—that held sway; and to such an ex-

tent, that they became indifferent to the growth and destiny of the Empire.

The Habsburgs founded a mighty "family power" on the principal of plural possessions, in which the original "State idea" no longer played any part. But the Hohenzollerns founded a State, for the development of which they worked unceasingly. They created their own state for themselves out of nothing and, in doing so, gave a uniform and common Fatherland to the people of that part of Europe from which it was formed.

They were the Burgraves of Nuremberg, the counts of Zollern. According to the view of a modern scholar their origin is to be traced back to the House of the Burkar-  
dingers, who were settled on the Lake of Constance; and they have also had their home in the Grisons, where the old Zollern castle of Razynz still stands, and where—so General Sprecher von Bernegg, the former chief of the General Staff of the Swiss Army, himself a Grisons man, personally told me—the

people still cherish the memory of our House with pride.

At the Council of Constance in 1415 Count Frederick of Zollern—who had been since 1411 Lord of the Kurmark of Brandenburg—was raised to the dignity of an Elector through enfeoffment with the Mark. He left the sunny south of Germany, in whose lordly flourishing cities the Emperors used to spend so much of their time, left his magnificent Nuremberg—with whose fortunes the Counts of Zollern had been linked since the days of Frederick Barbarossa—and departed, along with his aristocratic dependents, better-educated burghers and tradespeople, into the north, to his new task in a desolate and gloomy land.

It was a terrible difference that confronted him. A land covered with marshes and forests, a land spoilt by neglect and fallen into confusion through misrule and the innumerable endless feuds and struggles between towns and nobles; a population sunk into a



hopeless state of servitude and grown savage with brutal treatment; a nobility unbridled in its egoism, inclined to the marauding habits of robber-knights, and which in culture, customs and forms of social intercourse in no way approached the South German nobility, in whose midst the Zollerns had lived so long. In short it can be truly said, that when the Elector Frederick the First entered the Mark he found Chaos. His reception, moreover, was cool, even hostile and repudiating. We all know the saying about "Nuremberg geegaws."

This disastrous state of affairs could only be remedied by the institution of a State, ruled by an "objective State-Authority," which would stand above all classes, leagues and parties, which would be insusceptible to outside influences, and which would always keep the good of the "Whole" in view. A State whose members, no matter of what degree, would be forced to feel their obligation to work, to achieve, and even to make

sacrifices at the expense of their own personal private interests, for the good of the "Whole." An unheard-of demand for those days. This idea—which Frederick II, the Hohenstaufen, had already once endeavoured to realise—was taken up by Frederick I, the Hohenzollern, and he began to convert it into practice.

His life was a hard one. Many were the bitter struggles he had to fight out to a finish, both in the subjugation of strongholds in his own territory and in wars against jealous neighbours. His aim was to encourage and develop the towns, to expand their commercial possibilities, by abolishing their petty spirit of small-scale trading, which the Electors found particularly unpleasant in comparison with the conditions prevailing in the towns of the South. In order that trade might be developed the roads to the market towns had to be cleared of the swarms of robbers, and the castles of the unruly nobles destroyed. By these means the Elector

Frederick I gave the towns freedom of movement and ensured their advancement and prosperity. His duties to the Empire often called him away from his work in the Mark, but he always took it up again on his return, unperturbed by no matter what difficulties. Through his marriage he stood in close relationship to Bavaria, for he took as his bride the daughter of Duke Frederick of Bayern-Landshut. The peasants of the Mark called her "Beautiful Else," and she won her way into the hearts of the people by works of charity to which they were not accustomed.

That the Elector Frederick I was a particularly talented and distinguished statesman is well established. In this connection I remember conversations I had with Ganghofer over sources which only became available in recent times. This author, in whose "Ochsenkrieg" the figure of the Elector appears fleetingly here and there, told me that he had found so much interesting and still abso-

lutely unknown and unused material in the Bavarian Archives about the Elector Frederick I, showing that he was a personality far and away distinguished above his contemporaries, that he had decided to write a historical novel about him, which should do him full justice, and at the same time emphasize the important influence he had among the princes and on the affairs of the Empire. If I remember rightly, Ganghofer drew a very apt parallel between the Elector Frederick I and Burgrave Eitel Friedrich I, cousin to Rudolf of Habsburg, who played the same part in the Empire under that Emperor, as the Elector did later on.

Unfortunately the war and this gifted author's early death prevented the fulfilment of his project.

And here I must insert an observation. When I was learning history, in my youth, it occurred to me that while mention is always made of the work done by the Zollerns for their own country notice is never taken of

the way they performed their duty to the Empire. Here also the memory comes to my mind of conversations, which I had much later on, with Professor Knackfuss, the historical painter of Mediæval subjects—as with Ganghofer—about the Hohenzollern family records. Knackfuss was a thorough paleographer, who used the results of his researches to great advantage in his pictures. To him I owe much valuable information about certain deeds of my ancestors for the Empire, which up till then had not once been mentioned in our family history. I quote briefly the most important events:

1. Burgrave Frederick III, Rudolf of Habsburg's cousin—their mothers were sisters—was influencing the votes of the Electors in Frankfort, in favour of Rudolf of Habsburg against the candidature of Louis, Count of the Palatinate, and above all against that of Ottokar of Bohemia. Knackfuss found a chronicle of Rudolf's, in which is described how, he, being in camp in front of

Basel and enjoying a morning repast of cabbage heads, was surprised to hear a blare of trumpets and to see his cousin, the Burgrave, ride up with the herald of the Empire at the head of a glittering retinue. When the Burgrave leaped from his horse and handed his cousin the missive announcing the latter's election as German king, Rudolf overcome, clasped his hands in prayer, and embraced the Burgrave. Full of wrath Ottokar of Bohemia now armed himself for battle against King Rudolf. A Tyrolese troubadour song, discovered by Knackfuss, describes the fierce battle on the Marchfelde between Rudolf and Ottokar in detail—even to the weapons, coats of arms and armour, of both knights and horses. Before it began Rudolf handed over the Banner of the Empire—an oriflamme, a long yellow pennon with a red streamer—to the Zollern, asking him whether he could trust himself to carry it unhurt through the battle. On the Burgrave's replying in the affirmative Rudolf

assigned him the Tyrolese knights as a body-guard for the protection of the Imperial Banner. According to the chronicle, which comes from the hand of one of these knights, they bathed the attacking Bohemian knights in a terrible sea of blood. The epic concludes with the statement that the Emperor had been closely bound to the Burgrave in intimate friendship all his life and that he had often sought his advice, as a wise and clever lord, in matters concerning the Empire. An interesting proof of how, in the early days, Habsburgs and Zollerns worked together for the good of the Empire.

2. We are standing with the Emperor Henry VII in front of Rome in 1312. He is the hero whom Dante summons to free Rome from her disgraceful misrule. The report of a journey made by a certain priest, who was private secretary to the Bishop Balduin the Great of Trier (the Emperor's brother and his strenuous defender against the malicious attacks of the Vatican) gives us this incident

from the Emperor's Roman expedition. Knackfuss found the document, an illuminated manuscript, in the archives of Coblenz. The Emperor Henry VII was a strong and conscientious upholder of all knightly duties, customs and usages. It came to his knowledge that in his army, then marching across the field of Nero with its front towards the Ponte Molle—known to us through the battle between Maxentius and Constantine—there were a number of young nobles who had not yet received the accolade. The Emperor, clad in full armour and mounted on his charger, with the Imperial Banner at his back, gave orders that the young nobles should pass before him, and he knighted them in full view of the army and of the oncoming Roman nobility. Among them was a young Duke of Bavaria and along with him the Burgrave of Nuremburg, Frederick IV of Hohenzollern. The pennons and coats of arms are shown in the pictorial illuminations of the manuscript. The ad-



vance guard of the Emperor's army is commanded by his vassal, Count Amadeus of Savoy, whilst in the centre there floats, among others, the banner of the last Count of Dauphiné. This bestowal of the accolade when mounted is the only example of it so far known in German history, and is therefore of peculiar value.

3. At Mühldorf and Ampfing the struggle was raging between Frederick the Fair of Austria and the Emperor Louis of Bavaria. The issue was decided by the Burgrave of Nuremberg, who by a clever flanking movement attacked the Austrians in the rear, took the Austrian Marshal von Pilichsdorf prisoner, and captured the Austrian standard, whilst Frederick the Fair surrendered himself to a vassal of the Burgrave Dietrich von Mosbach. The Burgrave handed over both prisoners to the Emperor Louis. (Uhlant: Ludwig der Bayer).

4. At Nicopolis in 1396 the army of King Sigismund of Hungary (the later Emperor



THE ELECTOR FREDERICK I

From "Altertumer und Kunstdenkmale des Erlauchten Hauses Hohenzollern"  
by Baron von Stillfried



Sigismund), which was composed of knights from every part of Europe and from France in particular, suffered a defeat, through the French detachments attacking on their own. After some initial successes the French were surprised whilst engaged in plundering, and overthrown by the sudden counter attack of the hoards of janissaries which the enemy had held in reserve, so that the whole army were flung into disorder. Here too Knackfuss unearthed an eye-witness's record of the battle. It describes how the Christian army fled to the Danube, closely pursued by the Turks. King Sigismund was saved from the danger in which the Turks' fierce charge had placed him by the brave selfless interposition of the Count of Zollern, who rescued the King single-handed from the pursuing Turks. He was taken to the galleys of the Maltese Order then lying at anchor on the Danube. Sigismund was able to express his gratitude later in Constance, when as Emperor, he made the Zollern an Elector. King Charles I of Ru-

mania has perpetuated the memory of this incident by a magnificent ornamental ship of silver which shows how the prince of the Wallachians, hurrying to the assistance of the Burgrave, calls a halt to the Turkish bands through the decisive attack of his cavalry.

All these events have been represented pictorially by Professor Knackfuss. These paintings—a history of our House in pictures—were hung in the new castle of Posen, which the Treaty of Versailles has now handed over to the Poles.

As has been shown then, my House played an active part in the early history of the Holy Roman Empire and produced characters which make their appeal as truly German men, faithful to their Emperor, and always acting for the good of the “Whole.”

The Emperor Frederick I put an end to the chaos in the Mark with iron strength and justice, and he laid the foundations on which his successors could build up the ordered

## MY ANCESTORS

structure of a State. Poetry has dealt with his enthralling personality and F. v. Wildenbruch has endeavoured to work out his character, in his play "Die Quitzows."



*THE ELECTOR FREDERICK II*





## THE ELECTOR FREDERICK II

FREDERICK II, called "Irontooth" or "The Iron," who succeeded him, continued the work of his predecessor, under whose care the towns had been developed and brought to a high degree of prosperity. The two towns of Cologne and Berlin, however, gave "Irontooth" a great deal of anxiety, and, both by their endless disputes with each other, and by their rebellious opposition to their territorial lords, put many difficult obstacles in his way.

Above all, the Elector's intention to build a castle in Cologne, on the Spree, in order to raise the dignity of that town by making it his residence, was met with the utmost resistance by the Burghers, always proud of their "privileges," and bragging of their "liberty." The statue of Roland, standing in the market place, was for them the symbol of their "civic liberty," which

they thought to be threatened by the building of the castle. And when—in spite of all resistance—the erection of a castle was commenced, Cologne and Berlin united to take advantage of the absent Elector, who like his predecessor was constantly called upon to defend, sword in hand, his authority from internal disorders and his country from external attacks. They fell on the castle he had begun, they hindered its progress, they refused obedience to their liege lord and they barred their doors. Frederick II collected his army together in Spandau, where he lived—hence often called by the people of the Mark “Herr zu Spandau”—and, supported by the Johannites of the Comthurei, marched against Cologne and Berlin and forced them to surrender. As a punishment for their rebellion he threw down their Roland, the “Symbol of their Insubordination.” And he built the castle up anew, calling it “Zwing Cöln” from that time onwards. This period of history has been dealt with by Lauff in his

play "Roland von Berlin," and the great Italian composer, Leoncavallo, wrote an opera with the same title "Orlando di Berlino" for my opera house, so greatly did the subject fill him with enthusiasm.

It is instructive to compare the opposite tasks that confronted the two first Electors in the consolidation of their personal power, and thereby that of the State itself, in internal affairs. If the Elector Frederick I had chiefly to fight against the turbulent nobles in the interests of the towns, it fell to the lot of "Irontooth," on the contrary, to set himself against the power of the towns, which were beginning to have a feeling of self consciousness and whose sense of power was not always leading them in the way of Right. So from both sides boundaries were set to prevent the spread of "private interests" at the cost of the "General Interest." The good of the "Whole"—of the "State"—came first; everything else had to be subordinated to that.

But "Irontooth" was also active in the sphere of "social" charity. He founded an Order—the "Order of the Swan" whose insignia was a golden chain, on which was hung a Heart, represented as crushed between instruments of torture, together with a Swan and a picture of the Mother of God surrounded by a cloth. According to its statutes both men and women of noble birth might become members of the Order, if they had "rendered services of particular value in works of Christian charity and mercy," not only in the care of the sick. This was the first secular Order "for social welfare" to exist on German soil, and it was intended to gain for the ruling prince the co-operation of the possessing classes in the alleviation of distress among the poor. It is an absolutely modern conception. Frederick William IV reconstituted the Order, and the Empress Augusta often wore it.

One more historically important point about the Elector Frederick "Irontooth"

remains to be noted. His disinterested iron hand secured the country as much order and peace as was possible and thereby created fresh possibilities of development in many directions. Amidst all the prevailing disorders of the period—the Hussite wars for example—such an achievement was very remarkable.

In 1415 the Elector Frederick I witnessed in Constance the burning of John Huss as a heretic: a black, shameful deed springing from hate-filled religious fanaticism. This event proved that the Church of Rome had not yet grasped the fact that although it is possible to murder the witnesses of truth (my ancestors Admiral Coligny and William of Orange for example), it is never possible to kill truth itself. This monstrous crime flung the door open to a new and violent era, in which there was a mighty clash of minds. The flames of John Huss's pile kindled a mighty fire in Bohemia whose blaze soon swept over the whole Empire. The Emperor

Sigismund, who had broken his word to Huss, leaving the defenceless man to his fate in spite of the letter of safe-conduct he had given him, was forced to call out his armies against the Hussites. But the Hussites, brilliantly led by Ziska and later by Prokop, defeated them. And several of the Electors of Brandenburg had to take part in the Hussite wars.

It was not easy for Frederick "Iron-tooth's" successors to fulfil their duties to their own country and, at the same time, to observe those which they owed to the Empire.

The Renaissance period, which was then setting in, loved to compare the most distinguished personalities of its day with the great figures of classical antiquity by nicknaming them after such classical heroes. So, for example, the Elector Albert was called "Achilles" by his contemporaries, because he was a very warlike prince, who even started a feud with Nuremberg, and captured that city's standard in personal combat. He remarked:

"There is no place where I could die a

more reputable death than in the midst of my enemies."

The Elector John was called "Cicero" on account of his eloquence, the Elector, Joachim I was surnamed "Nestor" because his clever advice was always welcomed in the Council of Princes, and Joachim II was hailed as "Hector" for his bravery.

With Joachim II a new period began in the history of my House. The Elector went over to the Evangelical faith, of whose truth from thenceforth till to-day my House has always been the guardian, that the richest blessings might be poured upon the land of Brandenburg.

It is true that the country experienced the most terrible misery during the Thirty Years War, and that it suffered the most frightful and horrible injuries both from the Swedes and from the Imperial troops as well as from the Allies. But it bore this martyrdom bravely, and kept strong in its beliefs. Governed and heartened by Luther's splendid



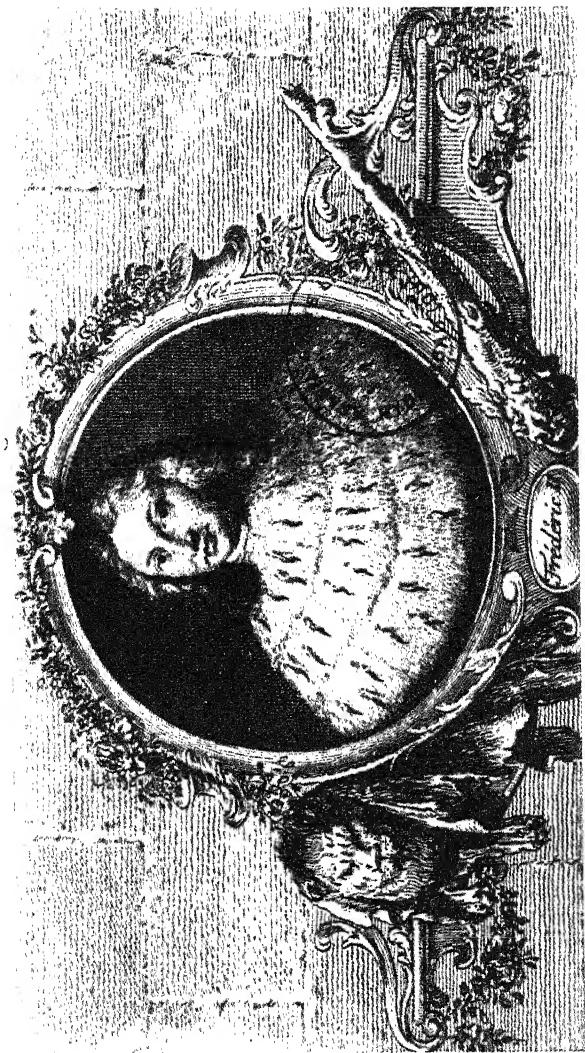
line "A safe stronghold our God is still," its faith never wavered. In those days they used to sing in Strassburg:—

"Gott ist des Menschen Schutz und Macht,  
 ein' feste Zitadelle,  
 Er wacht bei Tage wie bei Nacht, tut Rond'  
 und Sentinelle.

Christus ist das Wort, Hauptweg und auch  
 die Port,  
 Der rechte Korporal, Hauptmann und  
 General,  
 Reduit und Corps de Garde!"

*FROM THE SUCCESSORS OF  
FREDERICK "IRONTOTH" UP  
TO THE GREAT ELECTOR*





THE ELECTOR FREDERICK II  
"IRONTTOOTH"

From "Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la maison de Brandebourg." 1751.



## FROM THE SUCCESSORS OF FREDERICK "IRONTOTH" UP TO THE GREAT ELECTOR

IF the Renaissance was the mighty agent introducing great changes in literature and art, and more especially in the outward lives of men, widening their vision, and giving a powerful impetus to intercourse and commerce through the discovery of a new continent, it was also at the same time the expression of a range of ideas on a newer and higher plane, coming from the sunny Southern shores of the Mediterranean, and animated by the regained knowledge of antiquity. On every side it brought beauty and the cult of beauty, but it was also the cause of a loosening of customs and of views of life. Gobineau had depicted this wonderfully—absorbing figures among the princes, statesmen and men of learning (Macchiavelli).

But opposed to it there came to Germany

from the north another Renaissance, another re-birth in the sphere of the spirit: the great purification and reform of religion by the miner's son and monk, the Professor of Wittenberg, Dr. Martin Luther. The German Bible, the Service of God in German, were presented to the German people. Once more they were allowed to pray to God in their mother-tongue. The Word sounded powerfully in men's hearts and in their consciences. The Electors of Saxony and Brandenburg, the Landgrave of Hesse, the northern Kings, and even the ruler of Britain took the side of the great reformer and secured liberty of religion for their people.

Then came the Counter Reformation, which, not being over particular in its methods, soon led the conflict of intellects onto earthly fields of battle, where the decision on the form of the Lord's Supper and other questions had to be fought out with weapons. A great and flourishing country lost everything it had gained for

itself in the realm of culture, and was ravaged, slaughtered, plundered, burnt and laid waste *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, whilst the foreign defenders of the Evangelical faith invaded it with their subsiduaries and harassed it just as badly as the enemy did.

The systematic way in which Sweden, for example, learnt to plunder Germany, was taught me by my visits to the State Museums in Stockholm, Gripsholm and Sko-Kloster, as well as in several old castles. Above all in Sko-Kloster, where the gold and silver drinking-cups, bowls, and table centrepieces stand in rows, cabinet by cabinet, all marked with the names of the plundered towns they were taken from, in rooms containing sets of furniture, which must have been carried off in complete suites. A sight that was to me an affecting and melancholy picture of the high culture to which my Fatherland had attained before the Thirty Years War. Yes, for thirty years people fought and slew with fire and sword on German soil in order—originally—



to impart their conceptions of the true interpretation of the Gospel of Everlasting Love to their opponents. Later on "high" politics took a hand in the game. Gustavus Adolphus, especially, toyed at the back of his mind with the idea of founding a great Swedish Empire at the cost of Germany, and particularly of north German territory.

Brandenburg suffered terribly: her severely afflicted people sank into the deepest misery and endured the most ghastly torments. Her well wishing, good hearted Elector George William, a man of unwarlike nature, attempted in vain to protect his country from the warring powers by means of negotiation—or as it is called to-day "diplomacy." In vain! Diplomacy is only effective when there stands behind it a people in arms ready to give it weight with united will, and the Elector could not arrest Brandenburg's disrapture. A foreign statesman once said to me:

"Such a monstrosity as the Thirty Years

War was only possible in Germany. It is inconceivable in any other country. To knock each other on the head for thirty years for the sake of an idea—for a religious formula is in the end an idea—is something which only the Germans could have done, it would be unthinkable with any other nation. The Germans are the only people who straightway take up theories and principles and endeavour to convert them into practice, without considering their own existence, indifferent as to whether in so doing they compass their own destruction.”

And Professor Wilson too was able to stir the Germans at their very roots and to set them on fire simply through the World-apotheosis of an idea. Only, when the Germans had been won over to it, and when they had yielded up every means of self-defence, then there was no more talk of the idea. As soon as the bribed and outwitted people were defenceless, it suddenly changed itself again into crude force.

In this survey of the Era of Intolerance, of which I have been speaking, I must also mention the unhappy dissension in the Protestant Church, which has not yet come to an end. In the Marburg disputation between Calvin and Luther their entirely different views of the true conception of the Lord's Supper, that is, over the right interpretation of the sacramental words of our Lord, created such a split, that the rent became irreparable. "Ist" and "Bedeutet" ("Is" and "Represents") were the battle cries, and unfortunately Luther allowed himself in the end to be carried away so far as to deny that his opponent was in possession of the pure and true spirit; and in this he was not justified. His "*est, est*" was the cause of much mischief.

If this event, the schism between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches is much to be lamented for itself, it is all the more to be lamented now that—as philology has made clear—we are obliged to say that the dispute between the two great reformers was abso-

lutely beside the point. Neither of them was acquainted with the original Aramaic tongue, which we can now read. Aramaic belongs to the Semitic group of languages and may be regarded as the precursor of the modern Syriac-Arabic. Aramaic therefore has no verbs. And so, since our Lord habitually spoke Aramaic to his disciples he can neither have said "Ist" nor "Bedeutet" but can only have used a substantive. Calvin's general conception of the Lord's Supper as a feast of Remembrance, is also supported by our Lord's words: "Do ye this in remembrance of me," and is absolutely justified.

But the great mistake in the dispute was the pinning of it down to the sacramental words, that is, to their sense, because in so doing the much greater and more potent fact was completely overlooked that our Lord, by means of symbols in palpable earthly form—bread and wine—which men could see with the eyes of their body, was tendering with his hands palpable guarantees that their sins

would be forgiven them. Luther's long monastic life had so attached him to the performance of the Consecration of the Host, that he viewed the "Ist" of it as the main point, forgetting that our Lord, sitting before his disciples in his earthly and human form absolutely contradicted Luther's conception. The main point for us men is neither "Ist" nor "Bedeutet," but the guarantee of the promise: "Your sins are forgiven you!" And I announce this to all members of my House today, that they also may be active, each one according to his powers, in helping to bring to an end the unhappy dissension between the Lutherans and the Reformed Church!

In 1613 the Elector John Sigismund decided to go over to the reformed creed. With this step there first enters into the history of Brandenburg the conception of tolerance, the defence of which by my ancestors is one of their particular claims to glory.

The Thirty Years War made a deep cut in the normal line of development of the State

of Brandenburg, which up till then had been moving outwards, and which was already able to show an important increase of territory in the East, through the acquisition in 1618 of the Duchy of East Prussia under the Suzereignty of Poland, and in the West through the acquisition in 1614 of Jülich, Cleve, Mark and Ravensberg. From 1618 it was known as the Brandenburg-Prussian State.

Everything appeared to be lost and ruined. The work of centuries, that had been begun by the fathers and continued by the sons, seemed to have been in vain. The collapse seemed complete, for the country's strongholds were in the enemies' hands. It was Chaos over again. And it was in these circumstances that the gentle irresolute Elector George William closed his eyes, in 1640, and left the young Electoral-Prince Frederick William an inheritance, which made demands on the barely twenty-year old prince such as a more powerful, more experienced, older and

more hardened statesman might have shrunk from with justification. *De facto*, he had on his succession no country at all, and such limited defensive forces as remained here and there refused to take the oath of allegiance to him. It was only on almost impossible conditions that the King of Poland was induced to leave him the feudal rights and possession of Prussia.

*THE GREAT ELECTOR*





## THE GREAT ELECTOR

It can be said without exaggeration that, on his succession, the Elector Frederick William was confronted by the same state of chaos as his ancestor the Elector Frederick I. Everything had to be built up anew out of the existent ruins, and under the observant control of suspicious enemy states.

But the young Elector was the man for the job.

He had grown up in the Netherlands, in the plain and simple court circle of Frederick Henry of Orange. In the Netherlands he had been able to observe at first hand what an industrious, assiduous diligent people could do. He had been a witness of how this people had revolted against the terrible and unheard of oppression of the Spaniards—an oppression inspired by religious hatred. He had watched it tirelessly take up arms in

defence of its Faith—and thereby also of its political liberty—and seen how, forming itself into a close knit ring under the leadership of the brave Nassauers, and of Frederick Henry of Orange in particular, it had overpowered its enemies and thrown them out of the land. The young Electoral-Prince had been there, on the spot, in the camp of Orange, greatly loved by both officers and men for his cold-blooded bravery, and for his stern austere way of living.

With his own ears, he had heard the Netherlander's glorious prayer of thanksgiving,

“Wir treten zu beten vor Gott den Gerechten,”

go up to Heaven after victory, and the *Wilhelmslied*, “*Wilhelmus von Nassau bin ich, aus Deutschem Blut.*” (On my accession to the throne I re-introduced the prayer of thanksgiving and my brave army often sang it during the War. The *Wilhelmslied* was always played at the conclusion of

the Divine Services in the Royal Chapel in Berlin as long as I held them there.)

Later on the Elector took as his bride Louisa Henrietta, a daughter of the Prince of Orange. She was a poetess of profound piety. To her we owe the Choral "Jesus, meine Zuversicht."

As has been said, Frederick William, then hardly twenty years old, found chaos whirling before him. To begin with he could not even set foot in his own land! The Imperial troops and the Swedes were scuffling about in it and holding it in their possession. The Western territories on the Rhine were in the hands of the Netherlands. The Swedes had occupied Pomerania and proposed to keep it. For Prussia he had to take an inconceivably oppressive oath of fealty to Poland, whilst the so-called Brandenburg troops stood for the most part by Austria and did not want to take the oath of allegiance to him. Truly the picture that unfolded itself before the eyes of the beholder was one of the

utmost confusion. What then! What if the Mark had even been full of devils! Treitschke has described the Elector's appearance on the scene very aptly in the following passage:

“With little more than a staff and a sling, a prince without a country, the Elector Frederick William, the greatest German of his day, entered the desolate German life, and animated the slumbering powers of his State with the might of his will. Since then, in the growing Great Power of Germany, the might of the royal will, always conscious of its aim, has never been lost. The Prussian-Brandenburg State is the work of its Princes.”

Even on his accession at a very early age the Elector Frederick William is already a conclusive proof of the fact that always, when it comes to the point, the history of a nation is made by an individual—and only by an individual.

As I can clearly explain, the appearance of the Elector Frederick William was a turning



*Georg Wilhelm, Kurfürst von Brandenburg, Herzog von Preussen, Graf von Cleve, von Berg, von G. und von Ravensberg, etc.*

### THE ELECTOR GEORGE WILLIAM

From a collection of portraits in the Hohenzollernschen Hausbibliothek  
Volume III "Brandenburgische und Preussische Fürstliche Personen"



point in the history of our House as well as in the history of our country.

When a ruler lacks the armed forces to free his fatherland from the oppression of its enemies he is, I grant, compelled to rely on diplomacy alone. The young twenty-year old Elector proved himself such an accomplished diplomat that, by negotiation, he actually succeeded in persuading first the Imperial troops, and then the Swedish robber-hordes, to leave the country. Finally in 1644, four years after his accession, he was able to set foot in his own country, the Mark, and to enter his capital, Berlin, whose inhabitants at that time still numbered only 6,000.

In 1641, in order to acquire his feudal rights over the Duchy of Prussia, the young prince had been obliged to submit to the payment of an inconceivably heavy tribute to Poland and to the obligation to send her troops in time of war. Moreover the nobility of the Duchy were left outside his jurisdiction



on the energetic Protestant ruler, who had so unhesitatingly expelled from his country the plundering robber-hordes which were the Catholic troops of the Holy Roman Empire. There they were already saying, "This young Brandenburg lord's wings must be clipped or he will fly too high." To the Habsburgs, whose interests were purely dynastic, the picture of a true State such as was in process of construction, was distasteful and incomprehensible.

Then, in 1655, came the war between Sweden and Poland. Equipped and ready, at the Elector's disposal, stood the newly created army of Brandenburg, 20,000 men strong, under brave and devoted leaders. Of necessity he took the side of Sweden, who would otherwise have torn Prussia away from him just as she had grasped Pomerania. The battle took place at Warsaw. For three days the fight raged hot and undecided, until the Elector, coming to the support of the

Swedes with 16,000 Brandenburgers, settled the issue. This was for him an opportunity, not only to display his ability as a leader, but also to give proof of his personal bravery. The fierce onsets of the Polish-Tartar troops of horse, who charged in always renewed assaults against the Elector and his troops, were dashed helplessly to pieces on the extended row of pikes and partisans of his guard of gentlemen at arms (the later Leibkürassieren), and scattered by the calm fire of his musketeers, who stood like a wall round their Elector, in a steadfast square.

With the fiery eyes of an eagle, his flashing sword in his hand, he directed the battle, spurring his Brandenburgers on to the highest achievements—and they won!

The day of Warsaw was a revelation to the Elector's envious observers, to the defeated enemy and to his Swedish confederates. The astonishing fact was established: "Here was a new belligerent power; and it was already the equal of the world-famed Swedish Army."

In the treaties of Labiau and Wehlau the Elector's diplomatic skill succeeded in freeing him from the oppressive feudal suzerainty claimed over Prussia by Sweden and Poland. The peace of Oliva brought final recognition of Prussia's independence by all the Powers.

And so the core of the region, which was later to become the Kingdom of Prussia, was made secure.

The young Elector had successfully raised the Brandenburg-Prussian State to a position of such importance in Europe that from that time onwards it was not only feared but even courted. The Habsburg Emperor had to reckon with its power, more, he needed it, and yet, in spite of all, constantly intrigued in secret against it. At some later date the Elector, weary of Austria's double-dealing, once said to the Imperial Ambassador, "I can be deceived once, but only once." And these double-dealings were not even extinct in 1918.

Nevertheless the Elector fulfilled his duties to the Empire. He lent the Emperor armed assistance in the wars of defence on the Rhine against Louis XIV. Soldiers, Asiatic in kin, were burning, slaying and destroying everything on both sides of the Rhine, on the blessed plains of Alsace and in the Palatinate. When the Elector's well-disciplined troops made Alsace uncomfortable for the marauders, his most Christian Majesty the *Roi-Soleil* set the Elector's old enemies the Swedes on to him in the Mark. But he misjudged the Elector's material resources as much as his will-power and personality. Frederick William gathered his whole cavalry brigade of dragoons together—they were also trained to fight on foot as infantry—and rode off. The foot soldiers were taken on waggons and followed as fast as possible. "It was a rapid ride from the Rhine to the Rhyn; and a fearsome fight, the day of Fehrbellin." Derfflinger understood his chief and all that depended on the game. Rathenow was cap-

tured by a surprise night-attack. The Elector suddenly and unexpectedly appeared in front of the Swede's main body at Fehrbellin and defeated their considerably superior force with his handful of troops so decisively that the power of Sweden in North Germany was broken and banished forever from the Mark, which had suffered so much under its oppression. News of the victory of Fehrbellin spread like wild-fire through the German and neighbouring states. At last a true German warrior hero had appeared again. And the Nation needed a hero. The Alsations were the first in Germany to fête "Great Elector" in song, whilst "his most Christian Majesty" abused "ce maudit Grand-Electeur." The will of a great German, his systematic work alone, had established a new German state *ex fundamentis*! Having gathered his material into his hands he set a world of enemies at defiance, enforced their respect, and smote Sweden, then one of the Great Powers of Europe, so decisively that

her interference in German affairs was set aside for ever. It was not chance, it was not luck, that led to these astounding results, no, nothing but the creative power of a vigorous personality, who had been steeled by a hard youth and the hardest of times, and who was called with justice the "Great Elector."

In so far as he was able he always lent the power of his distinguished personality for the protection of those who were persecuted for their Protestant beliefs. Thus he opened the doors of his State to those French fellow-believers whom the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes turned out of house and home, and made it possible for them to live in the free enjoyment of their faith in their new home under his protection. So the Great Elector showed how even in times of the greatest ruin, humiliation, and collapse, a steadfast and energetic prince may be able, with the help of God, to accomplish great things. True to his motto: *Domine fac me scire, viam quam*

*amulem* he too was "a simple Bailiff of God in his Principality."

The figure of the Great Elector has proved a fruitful source of poetry. Kleist portrays him in "Prinzen von Homburg," Wildenbruch in his play "Der Neue Herr." Contemporary artists covered the walls of the Palace at Potsdam with powerful allegories, and Fritz Rober of Düsseldorf painted the Elector in the attitude of riding sorrowfully through the devastated villages of the Mark. The battle of Fehrbellin, the Elector at the head of his dragoons, have given rise to many widespread traditions and much-used themes.

*KING FREDERICK I*





## KING FREDERICK I

SELDOM indeed has there been a greater difference between father and son, at all events as far as outward appearances are concerned, than between the Great Elector and his son, the Elector Frederick III—the later King Frederick I (the Great Elector was just a little above middle height). In comparison with the powerful figure of his father, the son, the child of Louisa Henrietta, was of small elegant build and delicate health, whilst, in contrast with him, the Markgraves of Schwedt—sons of the Great Elector's second marriage—abounded in health and audacity. History and tradition, dwelling chiefly on the brilliance of his court with its pomp and ceremonial functions has, with superficial judgment, curtly branded him with the nickname of "The Ostentatious." This is not fair to the man. He was filled with a high sense of

the commanding position his father had won for the State of Brandenburg-Prussia in battle, and decided to invest it in the eyes of the outside world with the dignity that was its due.

After tedious negotiation with reluctant Vienna his tenacity and perseverance finally won recognition of the royal dignity he was to apply to himself. The coronation, which was consummated in Königsberg with great pomp and ceremony, permitted him to assume the title of "King in Prussia." He now felt it his duty to endow his newly-won crown with all the magnificent pageantry that the princes of his time considered necessary to associate with the representation of their dignity. In order to make it quite plain that he was king "in his own right and authority" he did not allow himself to be crowned by the Church, but took the crown from the altar of God and placed it on his head with his own hands, as "by the Grace of God." He regarded it as having been received from

God, before Whom he would one day be called to render an account of his stewardship.

This same high responsibility was stressed by my grandfather, in performing the same act at his coronation in Königsberg. It was to be looked upon as a symbolical act, showing that the royal dignity was assumed as the incorruptible, highest office of the Almighty, to Whom it was responsible. This conception is—in the form of hereditary Kingship—as old as the world. In the traditions of the oldest kingdoms of Mesopotamia, as in the Vedas and Upanishads of Ancient India, the same idea is to be found, of the Supreme Defender of Right and Order responsible for everything to God.

It is true that the prestige of the royal dignity—necessary according to the notions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—cost a great deal of money and laid heavy burdens on the country which could and ought to have been avoided by less heavy and in part unessential expenditure. It was just

the custom of the period that was followed. Later on things were managed more economically.

King Frederick I continued the care of the army with prudence and energy after the example of his father. The Great Elector had retained the right of appointing the regimental-commanders and officers of higher rank, and now Frederick I took an important step further forward by ruling that all officers should receive their commissions from him, and that thenceforth their careers—promotions and discharge—were to be determined by him. Here the fundamental idea was to gain complete control of the army as the most important instrument of power, and to render the appointments in it absolutely free from preference and favour, through the very constitution of the nominating authority. The King also introduced uniformity into the dress of the troops in the different arms of the Service, infantry, light and heavy cavalry and artillery.



THE GREAT ELECTOR FREDERICK WILLIAM

From a collection of portraits in the Hohenzollernschen Hausbibliothek  
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And in the same way he laid down regulations for the emblems to be borne on the banners and standards (his monogram in their corners), allowing the armorial colours of the commanders to stand in the fields of the banners, but presenting the first company of each regiment with a white standard bearing his own coat of arms. Regimental rolls and lists of officers were introduced, and so it was the "Ostentatious" who was the creator of that far-famed, much slandered and absolutely misunderstood institution, the Prussian Corps of Officers, which became a model for the whole world, and whose deeds and achievements the annals of military history show to be unsurpassed. The trainers of the army in peace—from 1818 a conscripted army—its leaders in war, the Prussian officers were dependent on their kings alone, and they helped them with tireless, selfless, obedient devotion to create first Prussia and then Germany. The Kantian "Categorical Imperative of Duty," the



Prussian Kings' rule of conduct, ruled also as the supreme law in the minds of their officers, rendering them capable of unstinting sacrifice of their lives and property for the sake of their Fatherland, for its welfare, its laws, its establishments and its traditions, and enabling them, at the same time, to imbue their troops with a like spirit. King Frederick I was thus the creator of Prussia's model and incomparable Corps of Officers.

He left an outward sign of his new royal dignity by the foundation of the "High Order of the Black Eagle," choosing orange as the colour of its ribbon in remembrance of his mother, Louisa Henrietta of Orange, and as a lasting memorial to the house of Nassau-Orange with which by this time there was a strong bond of family relationship. His dazzling, lively and clever consort, Queen Sophia Charlotte, began the line of Prussian Queens most worthily. She knew how to attract into her circle the wittiest and most distinguished minds. I will mention only

## MY ANCESTORS

one of the names that shone forth from this circle—Leibnitz—a man who grew to be a scholar of such world renown that he attracted the attention of everybody's eyes and above all those of the powerful Tsar, Peter the Great.

On the occasion of the latter's visit to Berlin, or perhaps at some later date, there occurred the following incident, which I learnt from Professor Harnack. The Tsar, whose mind was full of far-reaching plans and enterprises for extending the power and boundaries of his Muscovite Empire, was seized with the idea of annexing, not only Siberia, but also all the land up to the Pacific Ocean. Because of the immense difficulties of transport and lack of travel facilities in those days, however, the Tsar's project caused great concern and even opposition among his councillors. In order to get a clear view of the matter, and to remove all doubt from his mind, Peter addressed himself to Leibnitz with the question as to whether he considered

it advisable, and also possible, for the Eastern boundary of the Muscovite Empire to be pushed forward to the Pacific. Whereupon the great—as we call him to-day—geo-politician, answered the Tsar: “It is your Majesty’s absolute duty and obligation to your Empire to attain the coasts of the Great Ocean even if your Majesty has to travel there in a dog sledge!” This advice was the starting-point of the extension of the Muscovite Empire up to the realms of the Far East, and it was due to a famous scholar in the circle surrounding Prussia’s first Queen. Yet another proof, that it is only great individual minds, conscious of their aims, that influence and direct the history of Nations—never the masses.

In the West, too, on the Rhine, we see Frederick I performing his duty to the Empire. With his valiant troops he defeated the French intruders and incendiaries in battle at Bonn and drove them out of the country.

At the beginning of his reign the young ruler had to overcome somewhat difficult conditions in his own House. The court attendants and people of the Great Elector's widow harboured malicious schemes for changing the succession in favour of her own sons, and even hatched plans against Frederick's life. With great tact and chivalrous behaviour, united to firm intention, he succeeded in bringing about a compromise with his step-mother, deeply impressing her by the sacrifices he made in her favour. This was a blessing both to the country and to his House, for he made sure of her gratitude and at the same time put an end for ever to all the evil rumours. This episode is handled in one of Putlitz's plays "Das Testament des Grossen Kurfürsten."

I think I have done enough to show that Frederick I's services fully entitle him to a place among the leading intellects of our House. The elevation of Brandenburg and Prussia to a kingdom and the laying of the

## MY ANCESTORS

foundations of the Prussian Corps of Officers are two great achievements, which should not be forgotten. They thrust his liking for pomp and magnificent display into the background as a weakness.

*FREDERICK WILLIAM I*



## FREDERICK WILLIAM I

THE Great Elector had consolidated the foundations of his State and created a defensive force for its protection. His son had elevated the State of Brandenburg-Prussia into a kingdom and thereby gained for his country the external position and consideration which was its due and which it had a right to claim.

With Frederick William I there came to the throne a man who was both a father and a tutor to his country, and one who had decided to instil into his people the idea of "work," that is of personal achievement for the sake of the "Whole,"—State and Home—and to develop it to its fullest extent. Work and activity in union with God. He who did not co-operate—as much in prayer and praise as in work—he who showed himself a laggard in office or whose performance did not come up to the mark of the work he had to do,



incurred the anger of the royal father and often felt his stick. The magnificent court-dresses vanished, the courtiers' gold and silver trimmed coats made way for the simple uniforms of the officers. "Prussian drill" was born: a rigorous discipline began to make itself felt in the Army, among the people and in Society.

The strong-willed monarch laid a severe restraint on his House and country, particularly in matters of simplicity and economy in standards of life. Strong emphasis on the religious basis of life was, again with Frederick William I, a characteristic trait, corresponding to his ancestor's watchword—the wish to be "God's simple Bailiff in His Principality." His personal piety and sense of being bound in obligation to God—to Whom he felt himself responsible both for the maintenance of religion, and for the further development of his country—filled the King with a strong conviction that his orders, in no matter what department of life, were to be

implicitly obeyed. Whoever made evasions or was refractory or disobedient—in the King's opinion—was pitilessly broken, yes, he did not even hesitate to make use of the executioner's axe. His rage could be terrible. Because he himself always acted at bottom with the highest motives, he looked upon resistance or disobedience as an insult to Heaven as well as to himself. If he could not convince a man he broke him. This attitude must necessarily have occasioned many bitter hours and conflicts, especially in the family circle. A pietism that was not altogether sound began to show itself at that time. The Faith in its sublime simplicity as Our Lord exemplified it to us, became overgrown with far too many theological and scriptural minutiae as well as with sentimentality. Its forms ossified; and much superficiality crept in, by which those who felt differently were repelled. Household prayers are good and necessary when the members of the household hold the same beliefs as its

master and join together in the morning of their own free will to gain strength for the labours of the day through a short Bible-reading. But when we read the descriptions of the family Services and hours spent in prayer and devotion—especially the descriptions of those in his own circle, which the King held altogether too often—we are left with the feeling that his intended purpose could not always have been effected. At all events it was not effected as far as his eldest son was concerned. Here there begins to develop the drama which the King had to live to see played out in his own House, and the acts of which were to cause him so many bitter hours in the midst of the vast work he was accomplishing for his people and country. For although the King's personal piety was in fact fundamentally genuine, it was continually being neutralised or absolutely forced out of sight by his self-will and paroxysms of rage. It thus often appeared to be mere hypocrisy, and the son saw nothing

but a pretence and an unrighteous bigotry, which his clear-seeing mind refused to have anything to do with.

Already in the youthful Crown Prince were germinating those seeds of the new era which he was later called upon to introduce, and which was of necessity bound to come into conflict with the epoch at the close of which his father stood—and all the more so the closer the latter represented his times and attempted to protect what he had implanted in Prussia as needful and believed to be endangered by his differently inclined son. The King was deeply permeated with a sense of his mission, his duty as a ruler to his people and country. He looked upon it as a mission given him by God for the completion of which—under responsibility to God—he had to put everything at stake and break down all opposition. Hence he was animated by the single thought “Fritz must be just like me.” A superhuman demand. No son can be exactly like his father, as the line of our ancestors

shows us. Each one is the child of his time. The heir to the throne can be so educated that—without departing from the great and general line of tradition set by his father and forefathers—he may be able to bring the preferences of his own age into harmony with those of the previous one, and to blend them together, breathing new life into time-honoured institutions, and developing them, even if in doing so he makes use of different methods. If such is the case he will be a blessing to his House and to his State. But if the heir to the throne sets more store by the detrimental accessory phenomena of the so-called new, or truly new age, and attempts to give effect to them without consideration for the established customs of his House, or in opposition to his reigning father, and if, in addition, he is badly advised, he may then very well become a danger to his country.

The young Crown Prince's open mind, quick comprehension, and warm enthusiasm for everything beautiful and grand in life,

literature, art and science, soon taught him to recognise the barriers which his father was everywhere setting up; and he attempted to surmount them or to pull them down. To the King, passionately attached to untiring performance in creative activities and work for the good of the State, such things as music, poetry, etc., seemed to be nothing but "allotria" (things far removed from the main purpose) and waste of time, unworthy of a prince. That they beautify the working life, invigorate and strengthen the tired mind in leisure hours, remained hidden from him. Since he had no need for them neither ought the Crown Prince to need them. Where Frederick William I had recourse to hunting and to unceremonious smoking parties—his "Tobacco Parliament"—as a relaxation from the day's toil and work, young Fritz consoled himself with poems and sonnets, and with airs on his beloved flute, over the wrongs he often had to suffer from his unjustifiably enraged father.

The King inflicted fearful sufferings on the Crown Prince and the intolerant severity and boundless tyranny with which he endeavoured to curb him may well have extinguished many a hopeful spark. This conflict between father and son was unfortunately not confined to the family circle. It soon became a matter of public knowledge. On journeys made in the company of the King the Crown Prince was often subjected to humiliating treatment *coram publico*. Especially when the King feared that the brilliant and frequently loose life of other courts, particularly that of Dresden, might have a detrimental influence on his son. It is true that Augustus the Strong's display of magnificence and the brilliance of the feminine world there made a lasting impression on the Crown Prince, and warmed and inflamed his youthful heart; he would not have been a man, at any rate not the man he was, if he had not been filled with the sublime spirit breathed into him; but, with all that, his clear-sighted



KING FREDERICK I

From Joh von Besser's 'Preussische Königsgeschichte' 1702



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vision penetrated deeper and discovered evils, that remained hidden from others. And he made his mental notes for later use. In the end the tyranny of the King drove the much plagued Crown Prince, who had gradually been forced into a state of general opposition, to a despairing attempt at flight. It miscarried. It cost his rash friend his head and brought him imprisonment in Kustrin.

The King flew into a downright frenzy. He threatened to have his son executed. "Disobedience" was the worst of crimes. Firstly that of the son to the father, secondly that of the officer to his superior. The King had to endure many sharp words as, for example, at the court martial when he held fast to the passing of the death sentence and General von Buddenbrock sprang up and shouted out "If your Majesty is absolutely decided on blood take mine, for as long as I live your Majesty shall not take his." This difficult time in Kustrin gave father and son leisure for thought and ended in reconcilia-

tion. The King recognised that by such means he could neither compel the Prince to become, nor metamorphose him into, a personality just like his own, and the Crown Prince began to appreciate what great moral motives lay behind his father's passionate tyranny and to be imbued, if not with love, at least with respect. This feeling must have been deepened in the Crown Prince when, at the King's command, he entered the Civil Service and gained a knowledge of the business of administration, especially that of the royal domains. In the course of time a body of officials had grown up who dedicated the whole of their working ability to the welfare of the State, following the will and example of the King in industriousness, devotion to duty and economical management. So Frederick became acquainted with, and learnt to prize, this magnificent instrument that his father had created. Its creator must be worth something even if he made the greatest mistakes in other directions! Through meticulous

selection, King Frederick William I had gradually provided himself with a body of men completely devoted to his will and completely filled with their mission for the good of the "Whole," of the State; men who dedicated all their powers to their work, not for the sake of the reward—they were poorly paid—but simply that the King's plans might be carried out, and his orders transformed into deeds. In serving him, they served the welfare of the whole country. It was the finest achievement in the practical realisation of the "objective State-Authority"—personified in the King, and standing above all interests. And so Frederick William I was the creator of the famous Prussian Civil Service—a body of honourable, industrious, assiduous, incorruptible men—an institution such as did not stand at the disposal of any of his contemporary fellow sovereigns, which became a model for the whole world, and remained unsurpassed. Prussia's Corps of Officers and Civil Service were unique in the

## MY ANCESTORS

world and they were called into being by the creative will of her Kings. Rising high in their vocation, they became, through the King's confidence, the King's guides and leaders.

As with most Germans even to-day Foreign politics did not appeal to the King. Even then, as in our own day, they were bound up with hypocrisy, lies, cant, and intrigues. Such things were repugnant to the King's honest, straightforward, truthful nature. He disdained to employ such methods; and not being in a position to see the hidden threads often became enmeshed. Above all the intrigues cunningly insinuated themselves into the discord between father and son, using the latter for their purposes against the former. When from time to time the King became aware of such activities, his temper got the better of him and it was his son who felt it.

How far the Queen Sophia Dorothea used to take her son's part in these troubles is hard

to determine, but he certainly often used to pour out his overburdened heart to her. Her marriage with the King was a happy one and was blessed by a numerous troop of children, but she too, had, without doubt, a great deal to suffer from the character of her self-willed husband, though he remained nevertheless very much attached to her.

The best known representatives of these political intrigues in Frederick William I's court were Seckendorf and Grumbkow, whose names are still remembered to-day, owing to their taint with this dubious honour.

In his army, too, the King maintained among both officers and men, stern regulations and iron discipline, with inexorable severity; forging for his son by strenuous work in peace time—by “Prussian drill”—that splendid and formidable weapon with which the latter was able to bid victorious defiance to a world of enemies.

The King moreover was not absolutely unfriendly to the Arts. He was even

a practising "artist." During his attacks of gout he used to fight pain and evil humour by drawing portraits. Now it would be his "Tall soldiers," now other models that he chose. The results of these efforts, *in tormentis pinxit*, are more original than beautiful. Examples of this royal art hang in the palace in Potsdam, and elsewhere; in the castle of the Bentincks, Middachten bei Arnheim, for example, which he more than once visited when making journeys to the Netherlands for purposes of study. He used to set out on these journeys from the Castle of Mojlund which lay near the Dutch border. On one such excursion the King—incognito, and disguised as a merchant—attended Divine Service on Sunday in Amsterdam, and happened to sit down next to a tremendously rich and important Dutch merchant. When the sexton was to be seen in the distance handing round the collection-plate the Amsterdamer pulled out his purse and placed a gulden upright on the pew,

whereupon the King put down two, the Amsterdam three, and so on until the whole pew was covered. In due course the sexton, speechless with astonishment at this absolutely unusual munificence on the part of the Amsterdamer, who was known to him as a skinflint, held out the plate to him, the latter swept his piles of guldens insolently into it: but when the disconcerted man presented the plate to the King—expecting a like blessing—the King picked up one gulden and put it in the plate, and swept back all the rest into his purse. This anecdote, however, is also told of Peter the Great.

To recapitulate: King Frederick William I taught his son, his officials, and the Prussian nation to “work,” that is, he taught them that it was men’s duty to give the best performance of which they were bodily and mentally capable for the good of the “Whole,” of the State, of the Fatherland; whilst, as sovereign, he provided his subjects with the fullest possibility of accomplishing their



achievements unhindered, through the protection of the "objective State-Authority" which he had perfected in practice. He drew up the Budget himself personally, paying the most scrupulous attention to every item and taking strict care that each one was observed. It may be said that he managed Prussia like a landed estate. In doing so he often met with opposition, but he understood how to establish his will as a "Rocher de Bronze" on the East Prussian nobility. The written instructions he prepared for his son contain character sketches of the nobles in the different parts of the country. They show that he had a good knowledge of human nature and are extremely delightful to read. He maintained Peace, but it was nevertheless he who wrote that everlastingly true sentence: "When you have anything to decide in this world the pen alone will not do it. It must be supported by the sharp edge of the sword."

*FREDERICK THE GREAT*



## FREDERICK THE GREAT

PEOPLE and public officials were now trained to economy and to work, the army was disciplined and "drilled," the Treasury was full. The tool lay ready to the hand of the coming ruler, and was waiting for the mind which would know how to take it up and employ it in living action. And the ruler came, well prepared, charged with youthful impetuosity and fire, fully decided to place his country in its rightful position. Making full use of the inheritance his father had left him in faultless condition, the young King Frederick II set himself to his work, in relation to which he felt himself and called himself, with justification, the "First Servant of the State;" thus symbolically expressing that he looked upon governing as a profession to which he had been brought up and educated; in which he was called upon to perform deeds of unusual brilliance, and to consummate the

highest achievements. The rule of the Zol-  
lerns organically developed itself into a voca-  
tion in an elevated sense, parallel with the  
organic increase in prosperity of their people  
and country, as the result of a social precept  
peculiar to the East Germans. The noblest  
flower of this genus of rulers "by vocation,"  
so deeply rooted in the land of Brandenburg-  
Prussia, blossomed in the person of Frederick,  
whom his contemporaries called the "Great"  
even in his lifetime. From the very begin-  
ning Frederick was completely filled with a  
sense of the importance of his position as  
King of Prussia, but at the same time he was  
fully aware of his high responsibility—a re-  
sponsibility which he bore alone and would  
share with no one—and also of his duties to  
his people and country. To them he dedi-  
cated all his thoughts and endeavours, all his  
being, and all his vital powers up to the day  
of his death. He took part in the develop-  
ment of the country on every side, invigorat-  
ing and stimulating everything with his own

profound opinions, plans and will. He had no use for unsolicited advice, as the little scene with old Dessauer showed, but wherever he found industriousness, reliability, and understanding of his aims he laid hold of these forces, and immediately, and unconditionally, utilised them for the benefit of the State. The powerful impetus of his vigorous, commanding mind swept his subordinates along with him and spurred them on to the highest achievements. The King knew his way about everywhere because he saw and controlled everything, and, if he did not spare his praise, he was at the same time hard on negligence, and annihilating in his criticism of faults.

He wanted the very best for the Prussian nation; therefore he demanded from his fellow workers, as from himself, the giving of their very best. There was no department in the internal administration of the State that he did not closely study, gain a complete knowledge of, and invigorate and develop with new and practical ideas. Here is an ex-

ample; on a visit to a country district, Frederick personally sketched the plan for the drainage of the Warthe-Netze Marsh on the back of a picture with a piece of chalk. When I inspected the extensive crown lands of Schmolsin in Pomerania, under the guidance of that excellent head-forester, Kramer, I noticed a great trench winding its way through the meadows. The forester informed me that the great King had personally selected the line of this trench, which fulfilled the double purpose of draining wet spots and watering dry ones at the same time. Modern technique could contrive nothing better.

The King had a great genius for politics, a very rare phenomenon among the Germans, to whom even at the present time this gift is for the most part denied. Frederick conducted his political plans coolly, decidedly, and ruthlessly, *ad majorem Borussiae gloriam*. When it was necessary to use arms in order to accomplish them he took to war,

and to his incomparable Prussian army, whose colours flew the "Frederick" eagle over the proud motto *nec sole cedit*. With astonishment and envious admiration the European Powers observed the King's brilliant leadership in a succession of wars in which he himself had to lay the strategical plans and to make the choice of tactics; and in which he led his regiments personally into battle. The history of the regiment "von Meyrink" relates how, during the advance on Leuthen, Frederick more than once, in person, directed the young ensign in command of the head of the column in échelon, towards the objective, in spite of the enemy bullets whistling from it. After Hochkirch the army, much weakened through heavy losses, drew off under the King's immediate command in strict order, as though on the barrack square. As a result, the Austrian's victory was worth nothing to them because they did not dare to follow it up.

At Zorndorf Frederick leaped from his



horse, drew his sword and—snatching the flag out of the hands of the ensign marching at his side—led the regiment “von Bülow,” which was in reserve, against the enemy’s fire, personally inspiring the wavering ranks of the first line with fresh courage. He became closely bound up with his soldiers and even defeat could not shake their confidence in their “Father Fritz.” His victories of Leuthen, and particularly of Rossbach, were greeted with jubilation, and were celebrated in song throughout Germany. They used to sing:—

Old Fritz need only to come to-day  
 And beat them on their trousers  
 The Imperial Army runs away  
 The French and Austrian-Pandours.

At last—for the first time since the Great Elector—another German champion had appeared, and he taught Germany’s hereditary enemy to refrain from the slightest insolence with her. At last there was a sense of



# THE SOLDIER KING FREDERICK WILLIAM I

From a collection of portraits in the Hohenzollernschen Hausbibliothek  
 Volume III "Brandenburgische und Preussische Fürstliche Personen"



national feeling again, the Great King belonged not only to the Prussians, but to the whole body of the German nation.

The great King used to test the tactical schemes he intended to employ in the field on the ground of what is now the army exercise ground in Doberitz. He had the sham-enemy led by a General, whilst he personally commanded the other side. The King would attack first, and then in turn act on the defensive, while the General attacked him. In remembrance of this I had a memorial stone set up to the great trainer and instructor of the Prussian army.

Frederick possessed a fine streak of sarcasm mingled with humour. Referring to his opponent, the sorrowful chief of the so-called "Imperial Army," which fought as an ally to the French, and numbered contingents from all the South German Princes, the King said: "The Prince of Hildburghausen I take to be something more than a fool!"

When, just before the battle of Leuthen,

## MY ANCESTORS

an officer applied for leave to visit his mother, who had been greatly upset by the death of her husband, the King wrote on the application: "Yes, the application is granted, I give him leave. For is it not written "Honour thy father and mother that thy days may be long in the land. . . ." And underlined it.

When a parson petitioned the King for a carriage because his parish was so large, the King answered, "It is written 'Go ye forth into all the world,' etc., not 'drive there.'"

During the difficult war years the King's lands suffered terribly, but his subjects never thought of withholding their trust or obedience; not even when the enemy actually stood in Berlin. Even in those days, full of danger and threatening clouds, a song was current in the country of Prussia: "Friedericus Rex, our King and Hero, for you we will beat the Devil out of the World." With this song, army and people unceasingly recognised the solitary, towering figure of Frederick, whose sovereign presence was capable

of directing the history of his people, and did so in a determined way.

A relaxation, a giving of itself up to spiritual things, was naturally a necessity to this ardent mind, as to every lofty-minded genius burdened with heavy daily work. Literature, poetry, the plastic arts, were all acceptable to Frederick. Sonnets, poems, literature of all sorts, offered his many-sided intellect suitable ground where he could cultivate his ideas and take pleasure in the resulting harvest.

But the King did not confine himself to solitary relaxation in these spheres. On the principal of "Pleasure shared is pleasure doubled," he attracted men of great intellect from all parts in order to exchange ideas with them. France, in particular, sent an important contingent of such men. The scintillating French mind, vibrating with the new ideas of the time made a particular appeal to Frederick. The language of Racine, Corneille, Bonnet, and of other great French geniuses—not to mention Voltaire—played a

leading rôle in Germany at that period. It attracted the King more than German. He felt himself at home in it. It was for him the vehicle of beautiful thoughts and of witty "aperçus," it permitted him to employ the most delicate refinements of expression and style, which he was not able to find in the unkindly treated German speech, and it allowed great heights of phantasy to be attained, for its vocabulary seemed to be limitless. And so "Sanssouci" was filled with the French spirit and echoed with French talk and verses. The King's friendship with Voltaire is well known, a topic that has been much handled. The Frenchman gave his royal friend and Mæcenas small thanks for it and in the end betrayed him, an occurrence that led Frederick to make the contemptuous remark: "On suce une orange et puis on la jette." If the King could so think and speak, thereby showing that in his innermost being he was not under the sway of Voltaire's magic or of the French spirit, his preference for

French thought, ways and customs, concealed a great danger, if not to him personally, at all events to his people. There is an irresistible law of civilisation that the penetration of unfamiliar things of culture from foreign circles of culture into some other circle whose organic development has been entirely different, works with a harmful effect on the latter. This was the case in the further development of Prussia. To sum it up briefly, Voltaire and French thought could not do any harm to Frederick himself, who, although he was their great admirer, always remained the Prussian King. But they influenced the opinions, feelings, mental attitudes and customs of his people in such a way that Prussia—the work of Frederick and his father—was catastrophically endangered. The French outlook on life, conducts of life and lightness of life, were too attractive to the higher ranks of society—Frederick's nephew at their head. These others did not possess Frederick's mental balance and power of self-mastery to



protect them against effeminacy, which even penetrated to the core of the army and resulted in decadence and defeat. The sorrowful outcome was Jena, 1806-07, and the seed of that disaster was sown under Frederick himself, although he was unconscious of it. This friendship held no blessings for Prussia.

Strangely enough another of Frederick's friendships has been almost entirely overlooked by history, or only very superficially treated. It has never been handled as thoroughly as it will have to be, though it was without doubt spiritually deeper, purer, more constant, and more personally productive than that with the Frenchman. I mean the genuine friendship which bound the great King to the Scottish Earl Marishal Keith and his brother the Field-Marshal. It has only really become known to the nation quite recently through the splendidly acted scenes between Keith and the King in the film "Der alte Fritz" ("Old Fritz"). The Earl Mari-

shal had been banished from Scotland and had been in foreign service in Spain and Italy, his brother also in Russia. On his way home after an unsuccessful attempt to visit his brother in the Russian service the Earl Marishal was received by Frederick, who took a liking to him. When General Keith changed the Russian for the Prussian service, and was promoted Field-Marshal, Frederick invited the Earl Marishal through him to exchange "his southern dwelling-place for the Sparta of Prussia." The noble lord accepted—He said "that just as his brother had left the icy regions of Russia for his sake so he too would sever himself from his southern sun." The two Scotsmen were welcome daily guests at Frederick's table.

Being distinguished in mind and learning, and of wide experience in the world, they were able to enjoy the confidence of their royal friend, who held them in particular esteem on account of the refinement of their

ways of life which a varied culture had rendered serene and elegant. They were firm in the saddle in military and æsthetic subjects alike. Such was the confidence of the King that, in 1751, he appointed the Earl Marishal his ambassador in Paris. He held this post for three years and was able to render the King valuable services there, as is brought out in the following words in a letter from the King. "My dear lord, it is difficult to find such a happy mixture of heart, head and learning as in you. All the more natural then is my high esteem for you, and this conviction makes me your faithful friend for ever."

From 1754-63 the Earl Marishal was Governor of Neuchâtel and later on he was again in Spain, still in the diplomatic service of the King.

A visit to Scotland did not bring him the satisfaction he desired and in 1765, after Frederick had written to him, "Summer or winter, night or day, in all seasons, all

weather, all hours, you will be received here with open arms by your faithful friend," the seventy-year old man returned to Potsdam. In order to keep his old friend near him the King built him a house, after his own designs, at the foot of the rise on which his own beloved Sanssouci lay. It was occupied by the Earl Marishal from 1766. Here Lord Keith passed the last twelve years of his roving life, in unswerving faith and gratitude to his royal patron, and highly honoured by everyone as the "King's friend." When creeping old age no longer permitted the Earl Marishal to make the daily ascent of the Terraces at Sanssouci to sit at table with his royal friend, the latter often dined with him in the New Palace, or in the nearby Chinese pavilion, to which the grey old lord could either be driven or carried. And Frederick often used to visit "his dear neighbour 'ant'," as he called the Earl Marishal—and to accompany him on his airings in the Park, walking alongside his bath-chair, so indispensable to the lonely

King had the exchange of ideas with the cultivated, distinguished, stimulating Scotsman become.

When Frederick was obliged to take the field once more, in the Bavarian War of Succession, the bitter hour of parting from his faithful friend had struck. As they gripped hands for the last time, the thought must have stolen upon both the King and the Earl that the parting was to be the final one on this side of the grave, that a reunion was improbable here below. It must have been bitterly hard for the lonely King to lose this friend as well and his sorrowful "Adieu, mon cher ami" must have been answered by a no less deeply moved, "Fare Well." On May 25th, 1778, the Earl Marishal closed his shrewd faithful eyes. The news of his death plunged his royal friend into deep grief.

Both brothers were faithful to the King unto death. For the Field-Marshal, an able leader of his sovereign's army, sealed his loyalty with his blood, when he was snatched

away by a deadly bullet in the unhappy night of Hochkirch.

I have intentionally dealt with this episode in the great King's life at some length because tradition and popular historical writings have treated it neglectfully in favour of his friendship with the Frenchmen, Voltaire especially. Delight was taken in picturing the King in witty exchange of ideas with the Frenchmen, in verbal battles, in which the "aperçus," the "bon mots," and the cleverly polished, telling judgments flew about without effort. But that was all an ingenious display of mental fireworks. If the friendship with Keith is regarded as an antithesis, it is very quickly apparent which of the two was the most valuable, which it was that gave Frederick the most spiritual satisfaction, that strengthened him and cheered him in his loneliness. If behind Earl Marishal Keith there had stood an Anglo-Saxon intellectual movement, as important, as conscious of its purpose, and as transforming of the age as

that of the French encyclopædists, then quite a different, more peaceful, more beneficial movement, responding more to German ways of life, would have occurred in Prussia. The sound English sense of reality, while paying respect to already existing nationally developed institutions, would have conducted the stream of ideas flowing from France into sounder channels, would have dammed them in with flood gates and made them harmless. The consequence of Voltaire and the encyclopædists in Prussia was Jena. That would not have been the result of Earl Marishal Keith. Both Keiths were knights of the highest Prussian order, the Order of the Black Eagle.

Here we must make mention of another true friend. The King's favourite instrument, his beloved flute, must be remembered. How often did he unburden his soul to it and give expression to trouble, torment, pain, and joy through its soft melodies, during the increasing loneliness that was the accompaniment of his increasing greatness ! The charm-

ing compositions for the flute that the great King left behind him are very numerous. It was not only soft tones, however, that welled from his high-soaring musical soul, for his army had to thank him for the Old Prussian March. The "Mollwitzer," and above all the "Hohenfriedberger," the most powerful song of victory of any conquering king and general (even to-day it makes Prussian hearts beat faster) came from the beloved flute. The latter was instrumentalised and became the exclusive march past of his Bayreuth Dragoons (eventually the "Königin Kürassiere") whose brilliant attack at Hohenfriedberg threw the Austrian squares over in heaps so thoroughly, that the regiment was permitted to march past the bare-headed king and his troops with the sixty-six flags and standards it had brought back from the attack. In Lauff's "Grossen König," in which the most real thing for me is that Frederick only speaks words that he actually wrote or spoke in real life, the incidental music was



collected exclusively from the King's compositions. They were entirely unknown to the audiences and filled them with delight.

This great connoisseur of the arts also dedicated himself to architecture, and showed what a brilliant taste and what grand conceptions he possessed. "Sanssouci," a pearl of rococo, still breathes the inspiration of his spirit. The New Palace on the other hand is considered by many to be the most powerful and distinguished architectural monument of his period, without rival in the world. The way in which the great King there understood how to use the rococo as a cabinet specimen in "the Grand Style" and to finish off the building and complete it down to the smallest detail has certainly not been imitated by any monarch on earth. Frederick had a great liking for pale rose and cherry colour and especially for pale blue and silver, an effect which cannot be excelled in refinement. This setting together of blue and silver is found only with us, and for the most part in the

King's private apartments in Potsdam and Berlin. When, in the last big Paris exhibition before the War, I exhibited exact reproductions of the royal apartments decorated with works of the best French masters such as Pater, Watteau and Lancret, purchased by Frederick, the French visitors were astonished at the combination of silver and blue. It was unknown in France, and they did me the honour of attributing it to my invention. When I learnt that I contradicted it and explained that it was my great ancestor who was responsible for this magnificent creation of a distinctive colour harmony, and it was a gratification and a pleasure to me to be able to introduce it for the first time to the connoisseur-eye of the artistic French nation.

The King also devoted his artistic interest to the theatre and helped to bring acting, diction, and music to a high level. So the "Great King," knowing how to turn his hand to everything, understood how to make his

effect felt by stimulating, promoting and animating in all departments of politics, of administration, of science and of art. A very great personality, alone on a wide field, thrown absolutely on his own resources; placed entirely on his own responsibility as "the first Servant of the State" before his God.

There has been much dispute and speculation over Frederick's religious ideas; as to whether he really had any religion, or was only a philosopher (the philosopher of Sanssouci), or a complete atheist. To my mind such controversies are only idle, petty attempts at unriddling. Of people who make bold to lay down and plant opinions on these matters in the world, no one asks what their own views in this respect really are, and so ought we to treat Frederick the Great. I ask every tolerably sensible person "Is it really thinkable that such a monarch—ruler of his country, father to his people, confident leader of his incomparable army, animated, as he



FREDERICK THE GREAT  
AS  
CROWN PRINCE

From a collection of portraits in the Hohenzollernschen Hausbibliothek  
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was, by the 'Categorical Imperative of Duty,' and governed by responsibility to Divine Providence—could have been capable of the gigantic achievements he accomplished, if he had not been inwardly directed by a feeling of deep religious fervour? ”

It is true that he did not make any outward display of his religion, either in the same way, or to the same degree, as had been the custom in the time of his tyrannical father and still was in certain circles in his own day. But where in Frederick William I we see fanatical intolerance ruling against anyone differing from him in the form of his religion, and frequent immoderate and unjust outbreaks of rage, in no way evincing Christian tolerance and love, and owing to which his piety must have appeared as a semblance only, more, even as hypocrisy in his son's eyes, we see in Frederick the Great a complete tolerance and just understanding, culminating in the much misunderstood and often misquoted phrase: “Everyone must attain salvation in his own

fashion.” That means: the practice of religion should be permitted to every Creed, according to its traditional form of worship, but not at the cost of, or in opposition to others, or under the absolute disavowal of religion. Thus Frederick energetically protected the Evangelicals in Schleswig, where they were bitterly persecuted by the Roman Church, building large churches for them, and compelling the Jesuits, who had robbed a poor young minister of his books, to return the stolen property, by levying a distraint on their library.

On the slopes of Beskiden, between Pless and Cracow lay some Protestant villages, whose inhabitants were most shamefully persecuted by the Polish Government, at the instigation of the clergy. Frederick collected together a large number of waggons, sent them all over there with a captain in charge of a squadron of cavalry, and had all the Protestant inhabitants loaded onto them, bag and baggage, and brought to Prussia.

He was certainly of the opinion that the Protestant "fashion" of attaining salvation was not one whit inferior to the Roman! *Suum cuique!* It was "To each one his own" in all things with Frederick, too, though never, with him, "the same thing for everybody."

Since Frederick the Great had to keep in touch with every detail of the whole business of his profession as a ruler, he was accustomed to dispatch his business in the quickest way, to make his wishes known, to express his criticism, and to mete out praise or blame, in the concisest form, by "marginalia." The "marginalia" form a veritable fund of capital humour and still exist, to some extent, as anecdotes among the people or among those in the know. Here is an example:

During a Royal course with greyhounds the hare disappeared and could not be brought to a kill, although the hounds came to a stop at the door of a village parsonage.

Sometime later the King was informed by some of the parson's enemies that the hare



had taken refuge under the voluminous hooped skirt of the reverend gentleman's wife. The parson had caught it, hidden it and eventually shared it with her for supper.

When the authorities proposed to take proceedings against the parson for "contravention of the hunt regulations," the King wrote, "On no account, seeing that only the parson has rights in those preserves."

In Berlin, on the Landsberger and Neuen König-strasse, the great King had had a house built, the cornices of which were decorated with sheeps' heads (it was pulled down a short time ago). When the occupier complained to Frederick that there were only 99 sheeps' heads on it, and asked for one more to make the number up to 100, the King promptly answered: "Stick your head out of the window and then the 100 will be complete!"

His Adjutant-General had to administer and report on the *personnel* of the army (supply of officers, promotions, discharges,

etc.). Frederick was well disposed to one particular colonel and wanted to promote him to major-general, but for this to be done, the colonel would have had to be given his step over the head of another officer who was his senior in the Service. The Adjutant-general raised objections because nothing could be brought against the senior officer to warrant such a set back to him, even if he had not been particularly efficient, and even if his Majesty did not like him. The King discussed the matter inside out, at length, and very vehemently, with the Adjutant-general, but finally saw the justice of the latter's standpoint. He signed two commissions by which both colonels were promoted major-generals. On the commission to the senior colonel whom he did not like Frederick personally wrote the following remark: "I have to-day advanced you to the rank of major-general, but you are not to imagine that this has been done on account of your merit. You have rather to look upon it as though it has

happened more in spite of God's anger, that you have become a major-general!" (This anecdote was told me by Adjutant-General von Albedyll, Chief of the Military Council to my grandfather, whose soul rests with God.)

Independent-thinking, energetic rulers, who have to make rapid decisions, employ marginalia to avoid loss of time. All heads of big business concerns also do the same thing to-day, as a technical device for the assistance of the management. Bank directors, directors of shipping firms, industrialists and others. What is understood as a matter of course for these gentlemen—whether in Europe or America—is also a King's right. For Frederick the Great the art of dispatching business in the quickest way was a pressing necessity in the utilisation of his working hours.

With regard to the style of the Great King's marginalia one should note that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and in the

early part of the nineteenth century, the German language was richly strewn with Latin and French words. In the second half of the nineteenth century the movement for the "purification of the language" occupied itself zealously with their abolition.

It must be admitted, however, that some of these foreign words often brought out the meaning of a sentence very precisely, aptly, and agreeably, and were at the same time in accord with the style and character of the age. I cite an example. The end of General Count von Wied's address to his regiments before the storming of the Burkerdorfer heights: "And His Majesty the King of Prussia expects that every one of us will do his 'devoir' so that His Majesty may 'réussiren'." His grenadiers understood him, fell to, and stormed the heights. I think it would have been difficult to "interpretieren" the King's order in a better way.

We now see the great King, crowned with glory, happily ruling and improving the land

so valiantly defended from his enemies, and whose position as a European Great Power he had gained for it in battle against the intrigues of German and foreign princes and statesmen. Here, respect and admiration! there, hate paired with envy!

An important milestone in his foreign policy was his decision to support the United States of North America—then in process of formation—in their War of Independence. He sent his aide-de-camp, Steuben, over as an adviser. Steuben became the great recreator of the North-American army. In close friendship with Washington he forged for him the weapon with which the latter was finally placed in a position to ward off the threats against the Union. After the recognition of the Union government Frederick concluded with Washington the Prussian-American Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce, which, passing over in 1871 to the New German Empire, still remains valid, with the clause relating to the inviolability

of the private property of the enemy in time of war undenounced. Wilson broke this pact—without denouncing it—and took away German private property and German possessions from their rightful owners. It will be for his successors to repair this grievous breach of American national honour to the utmost and to fulfil the conditions of the still valid treaty to their fullest extent. *Restitutio ad integrum*.

But all through the toil and work that led to the summit of his incomparable glory the great King always remained “the Solitary One.” His family, his brothers and sisters, the Queen, did not change that. Compelled by his hard father to marry a princess whom he did not love when he was Crown Prince, he had never been able to feel his wife as a comrade. She could not understand the “eagle soaring to the sun” nor follow him in the flights of his mind. Therefore she disappeared from his much agitated life; she played no part in it. His relationship with

his sister the Margravine of Bayreuth was probably the warmest. His brothers were only of value to him as long as he could employ them advantageously for the benefit of the Fatherland, particularly in the army. This is shown by his letters to Prince Henry. Prince Augustus died embittered. Prince Henry also came to hate the King in the end, and here jealousy doubtless played no small part.

How greatly the powerful figure of the King attracted his contemporaries, not only in Prussia and in Germany, but also in foreign countries, is shown by the great number of pictures, prints, representations in figure of all kinds, snuff-boxes and innumerable other objects, showing him in some particular situation or other, or containing his portrait, which were to be found everywhere.

One of the most enthusiastic portrayers of Frederick in the nineteenth century was the Scotsman, Carlyle, whose history of the great King is a really classical work

(one that ought to be on every Englishman's and German's table!). Among all representative artists no one has been so successful in calling "Fridericus Rex" into being in the minds of the Prussian people—as though he were living at the moment, so to speak—as the master Menzel. The nation felt that the young and the old Fritz, Zieten, Seydlitz, Winterfeld, and all those round the King must have looked just the same as Menzel pictured the King, and his generals and soldiers. Menzel presented us with "Frederick the Great" alive again, and he understood how to read into Frederick's soul so well that he has left his type impressed on us for ever. A foreign portrait painter, who was admiring a magnificent pastel sketch of Frederick from Menzel's masterly hand—formerly belonging to my father—without having seen Menzel's name, exclaimed "Ah! on le voit bien ce portrait est d'après nature!" On my remarking that it was done



by Menzel, an artist who was still alive, my visitor cried out with rapture "*mais alors c'est un sorcier ce Menzel, il a crée une résurrection.*" A conclusive proof of what irresistible power the character of Frederick can exert on men who absorb themselves in the study of it. He was indisputably the "Great."

When approaching old age retarded his working powers and his body began to grow infirm, the great King gave himself up to solitary contemplation ; he mused and meditated and lived in his memories. Then there will often doubtless have appeared before Frederick's eyes the figure of his "brutal " father, his great achievements and honourable purposes. And, recognising the fact that it was he who had created and prepared for Frederick the tool, in country, army, finances and officials, he will have had to submit his judgment on his father to a revision, and, there can be little doubt, to the latter's advantage. He will have quietly begged his pardon for

many too hasty, sharp and false judgments passed on him when he was Crown Prince. Yes, he had far far exceeded his father's unfulfilled plans and hopes! If only *he* could have seen his Prussia now!

Fritz must be "like his father!" He had—through his father—become something much more. But in one thing his father's anxiety was justified. He had hated the foreign, un-Prussian, strange new ways, which the Crown Prince Fritz hailed with delight, because he considered these ways to be a dangerous poison in the constitution of the Prussian nation, and he was afraid of it. This poison was, in fact, about to enter the body of the Prussian State and nation and to consume it.

It is true that, as long as Frederick was alive, he was able to conjure it away, but after he had closed his tired eyes, it worked on, until a quarter of a century later his life's work collapsed—like Sodom and Gomorrah came Jena.

## MY ANCESTORS

And before Frederick's tomb in the gar-  
rison church in Potsdam, Napoleon was able  
to command his generals "Hats off, gentle-  
men, if he were still alive we should not be  
standing here."

*FREDERICK WILLIAM II*



